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OPERATIONS OF THE 3D BATTALION, 503D PARACHUTE
INFANTRY REGIMENT IN THE LANDING ON CORREGIDOR,
P.I., 16 FEBRUARY - 2 MARCH 1945
(LUZON CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Battalion Staff Officer)

Type of operation described: ASSAULT OF A FORTIFIED ISLAND

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
INDEX.....	1
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	2
ORIENTATION.....	3
Introduction.....	3
The General Situation.....	4
Disposition and General Plan.....	5
Battalion Plan for the Drop.....	10
The Enemy Situation.....	11
The Battalion Plan of Assault.....	12
Movement to the Line of Departure and Final Preparations for the Assault.....	14
NARRATION.....	15
The Assault, First Day and Night.....	15
Events During 17 February.....	20
Events During 18 February.....	21
Events During 19 February.....	22
Events During 20 February.....	23
Events During 21, 22, 23 February.....	24
Events During 24 February.....	24
Events During 25, 26, 27 February.....	25
Events During 28 February - 2 March.....	26
ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM.....	27
LESSONS.....	31
MAP A Philippine Islands	
MAP B Lower Bataan Peninsula	
MAP C Initial Operation Plan	
MAP D 3d Battalion Situation at 1100 16 February	
MAP E "Topside"	
MAP F "Tail" Operations	

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ORIENTATION

INTRODUCTION

This monograph is an account of the operations of 3d Battalion, 503d Parachute Infantry Regiment, in the landing on CORREGIDOR, PHILIPPINE ISLANDS, 16 February to 2 March 1945.

In order for the reader to be given an appreciation of the situation, prior to the airborne assault against CORREGIDOR, it will be necessary to discuss briefly the major events, which led up to this operation.

Organized resistance on the islands of LEYTE and MINDORO had ceased by the end of December 1944. On 9 January 1945, forces of United States Sixth Army landed at LINGAYAN GULF, LUZON ISLAND, quickly secured a beachhead and pushed inland. By 3 February 1945, spearheads of these forces had reached the northern and eastern outskirts of MANILA. (See Map A) (1)

United States Eighth Army units, in this sector, were the 11th Airborne Division and XI Corps. The former, making an amphibious landing on BATANGAS and advancing upon MANILA from the south; the latter, after landing north of SUBIC BAY, had pushed south and was now driving east across BATAAN PENINSULA with the mission of cutting off the troops, located here, off from the rest of LUZON. (See Map A) (2)

As soon as the city of MANILA was liberated, it was imperative to secure promptly the entrance to MANILA BAY, which was guarded

- (1) A-1, p. 1
- (2) A-2, p. 1

by CORREGIDOR ISLAND, if the Port of Manila was to be utilized.

XI Corps, Eighth Army, was assigned the mission of capturing this island objective; however, this mission fell to Sixth Army, after zones of action for both Armies were allocated, prior to the operation. The overall plan contemplated an overland attack south, to clear the east coast of BATAAN; an amphibious assault on MARIVELES and a combined airborne-amphibious assault on the island of CORREGIDOR. (See Map B) (3)

THE GENERAL SITUATION

With the landing of I and XIV Corps, the enemy combat units were all caught in movement, with the exception of the 23d Infantry Division to the southeast of the beachhead, in the Central plain of LUZON, and the 58th Independent mixed brigade -- twenty five miles north of LINGAYEN GULF. The Japanese 10th and 105th Infantry Divisions were in the MANILA area. (See Map A) (4)

Elements of the U.S. Eighth Army approaching MANILA from the south and U.S. Sixth Army units from the north and northwest, had given early indication toward liberation of the city. In gaining control of and clearing LUZON -- the PHILIPPINE ISLANDS would provide bases for future operations against the Japanese homeland. (5)

On 29 January, troops of General Hall's XI Corps, under strategic direction of Eighth Army, landed on the west coast of LUZON, near SUBIC BAY, meeting little opposition. They drove east across the neck of BATAAN PENINSULA, as it was believed the Japanese troops, in this area, would endeavor to follow the

- (3) A-2, p. 1
- (4) A-3, p. 78
- (5) A-1, p. 5

identical course adopted by the hard pressed troops under General Wainwright in 1942. This course had been a general withdrawal of troops from BATAAN and MANILA to the fortress of CORREGIDOR, with a consequent increase in the defensive strength available to the commander on CORREGIDOR. (See Map A) (6) (7)

Preceded by heavy air and naval bombardment, elements of the 38th Division, XI Corps, landed on 15 February at MARIVELES on the tip of BATAAN. (See Map B) Resistance was slight, as our soldiers advanced rapidly along the perimeter road west of MANILA BAY. While battle for the city still raged, General MacArthur moved to open MANILA BAY and begin preparation to use this as a major base of operations for U.S. forces. (8)

On 3 February 1945, 503d Parachute Regimental Combat Team was alerted for a parachute mission, to capture NICHOLS AIRFIELD in the vicinity of MANILA; however, due to the rapid advance of ground forces on LUZON, this mission was cancelled on 5 February. The following day, the unit was again alerted -- this time -- for the mission of seizing and securing CORREGIDOR ISLAND! (9)

DISPOSITION AND GENERAL PLAN

The 503d Parachute Regimental Combat Team was located at SAN JOSE, MINDORO where it had been since the amphibious assault of 15 December 1944. (See Map A) The regiment, at this time, was undergoing unit problems and keeping in shape for a pending mission, which was always in the offing. Field Order Number 48, from Sixth Army headquarters, was delivered 8 February to 503d RCT headquarters. (10)

(6) A-3, p. 78

(7) A-1, p. 2

(8) A-3, p. 78

(9) A-7, p. 1

(10) Personal knowledge

In making the plans for the assault, upon CORREGIDOR, the commander of the "Rock Force" (officer in charge of all units on the island of Corregidor, otherwise known as "The Rock") had to take into consideration the topography of the island's terrain. The 5th Airforce was called upon, to obtain photos of CORREGIDOR, and a topographic relief model of the island, made by a GHQ Engineer topographic unit, was set up near Regimental headquarters and constantly remained under guard. (11)

First, the regimental staff, along with the battalion commanders, were briefed on all points known, regarding the mission. Each battalion commander briefed his staff and company commanders; and the latter, briefed company officers. A time schedule was put into effect, whereby, each platoon leader could brief his platoon, on all details pertaining to the operation. In this manner, every officer and man was thoroughly indoctrinated, as to the mission. (12)

At this time, it is best to give a description of the island. The island is approximately one square mile in area and is divided into two main sectors -- "Topside" and "Bottomside". "Topside" -- on the western end of the island, is the highest terrain feature. "Bottomside" -- is that portion of the island lying just west of MALINTA HILL. (See Map C) MALINTA HILL rises to a height of 350 feet and is the dominating terrain feature, on the eastern part of the island. The island is bounded by sheer cliffs and in many places rise to 500 feet from the waters edge. The only open terrain on the island is on "Topside", which comprises the parade ground and the golf course. (13)

- (11) Personal knowledge
- (12) Personal knowledge
- (13) A-6, App. A - Annex 1

Aerial reconnaissance flights were made, in order to make a close study of the island, for possible drop areas. By studying the maps of the island and the results of flights, it was disclosed there were three possible landing areas. Two possibilities were on "Topside", which were the parade ground and the golf course. The former was approximately 250 yards by 150 yards, and the latter a little longer, but of the same width as the parade ground. (14)

Another feasible drop area, was an unused emergency field, known as KINDLEY, towards the tail of CORREGIDOR or the eastern end and just north of MONKEY POINT. (See Map C) This was eliminated as a possible parachute landing zone, as it would achieve nothing more than could be achieved by an amphibious assault. The explanation of this was, if troops were dropped here, they would be exposed to enemy fire from high ground at MONKEY HILL and MALINTA HILL; also, attack from this area would have to move against heavily prepared positions. (15)

The decision to drop on the parade ground and the golf course was made. The former was designated as "Field A" and the latter designated as "Field B". Neither field was or could be classified as an appropriate jumping field; besides, both were too small to provide adequate space for landing. In addition, these areas were littered with wreckage, bomb-craters and tree stumps. Another hazard which presented itself, were the steep cliffs which bordered the drop zones. (16) The two combined provided the smallest area into which an air drop of combat troops, in any number, has yet been made. (17)

(14) A-5, p. 2

(15) A-5, p. 2

(16) A-2, p. 4

(17) A-5, p. 2

During this preparatory phase, all officers and noncommissioned officers, who were to be jumpmasters, made reconnaissance flights over the island in B-24's, which were on their regular bomb run in this area. In this manner, each jumpmaster was able to acquaint himself to some degree, with the terrain and to obtain a view of his particular "go-point" (a distinguishing terrain feature used by the jumpmaster as a guide). (18)

It was now necessary to coordinate with the air and navy powers, in regards to softening up the island, prior to the airborne assault. The air support phase of CORREGIDOR had started on 23 January and by the day of the airborne assault, 16 February, 3,128 tons of bombs were dropped. (19)

CORREGIDOR was subjected to the heaviest and most extensive aerial pounding, to which any area of comparable size (less than one square mile) had been subjected during the entire war in the Pacific. (20)

On the day of the assault, continuous air pounding was set up to precede and cover the parachute drop -- scheduled for 0830. An indication of air support, given the morning of the drop, was as follows: from 0745 to 0800, a group of heavy bombers dropped 260 pound fragmentation bombs -- each plane carrying 40 bombs. After 0830, the support was confined to areas outside the drop zones and east of the established 'bomb-line'; from 0830 to 0930, two groups of A-20's covered the unrestricted areas. By this time, the 3d Battalion was to be on the ground, and the air support was then limited to three squadrons of A-20's on the air alert; one prepared to fly smoke missions on call, and the other two -- to support the second parachute drop. (21)

- (18) Personal knowledge
- (19) A-3, p. 78
- (20) A-4, p. 59
- (21) A-2, p. 2

The troop carrying phase of the CORREGIDOR operation was accomplished by the 317th Troop Carrier Group. (22) This same group, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel John Lackey, had carried the 503d Parachute Infantry Regiment on previous missions, and the parachute personnel were all glad that this group, again, was going to put us out over the target! (23)

There were not enough Carrier planes to fly the entire regiment over the target on one flight -- therefor, the Rock Force Commander adopted a plan employing three lifts. Each lift to include a Battalion Combat Team. This was necessary to insure the troops, on the ground, would have the support to continue operations, while the remainder of the airborne forces were being dropped. In planning an airborne operation, three major factors must be considered: (1) number of planes available, (2) number of troops to be transported, (3) the distance from the "take-off" point to the landing area. (24)

Within the 317th Troop Carrier Group were a total of 56 C-47's, which were available. (25) The first and second lifts were to be composed of 51 C-47's and the third lift was to have 43 C-47's. Each lift was capable of dropping approximately 1,000 troops plus necessary bundles containing supplies and equipment, which could not be carried by the individual soldiers. (26) In addition to the three lifts, 12 C-47's were allocated for daily resupply and as the situation came under control, supplies were to come in by boat from MARIVELES. (27)

(22) A-2, p. 4

(23) Personal knowledge

(24) A-1, p. 52; personal knowledge

(25) A-5, p. 3

(26) A-2, p. 4

(27) A-5, p. 4

The first lift was to take off at 0715 16 February from MINDORO and was to contain the 3d Battalion, 503d Parachute Infantry, reinforced. The units to make up the reinforcements were: Battery A and one platoon Battery D, the latter armed with .50 Cal. HMG, were from the 462d Parachute Field Artillery Battalion; 3d Platoon, Company C, 161st Airborne Engineer Company; Detachment Headquarters, 503d RCT and Detachment Headquarters, 462d Parachute Field Artillery. The second lift was to take off at 1100 16 February, composed of 2d Battalion, reinforced. The third lift was to take off at 0715 17 February, composed of the 1st Battalion, reinforced. (28)

BATTALION PLAN FOR THE DROP

To utilize the two small drop zones, it would be necessary for the planes to fly in column. The decision to use column formation was caused by several factors, of which one has already been mentioned -- the direction of wind and the velocity of same. In formulation of the flight plan, it was decided to divide the planes into two columns -- one column over each field. (See Map C) They were to come in from the southwest, with the left column flying over Field A and the right column flying over Field B. Eight men were to be dropped on each pass of the plane and when this phase was completed, the planes would circle to the left (left column) and right (right column) and swing around and join the tail of the columns and continue as before until all twenty-four men (total in each plane) had jumped. (29)

By flying and jumping in column, to drop the entire Battalion would take approximately one hour for the jump to be completed. When the pilot of each plane had reached the "go-point", a green light would be turned on, indicating to the jumpmaster in the

(28) A-6, par. 3

(29) A-5, p. 4; personal knowledge

rear of the plane, that they were over the "go-point" and he could jump at anytime. Prevailing winds had made instructions necessary to every jumpmaster, to count three after passing his "go-point" and then jump his men. This "go-point" had been decided upon in a conference between the troop carrier and parachute staffs.

A control plane was to be on station about the drop zones. This plane employed voice radio, in the clear with the troop carriers, and was charged with the missions of correcting the line of flight, or altering the count of the jumpmasters. These factors based upon observation of parachutists already dropped. (30) Jumping altitude was set at 1150 feet above sea level. The two drop zones were 550 feet above sea level -- therefore, the actual jumping altitude was 600 feet. (31)

THE ENEMY SITUATION

Information from higher intelligence estimated the enemy strength approximately 850; however, no information was available as to his scheme of defense. Had the enemy been prepared for a parachute assault, our troops would have met stiffer resistance upon landing. (32) Later information received from a Japanese diary and one of the few prisoner's of war, definitely stated that the Japanese commander of all the forces upon the island, had been warned of the possibility of an airborne assault. This intelligence information had been received from higher headquarters, therefore, the commander made an estimate of the situation and came to the conclusion that such an attack was not possible -- mainly, due to the terrain. (33)

- (30) A-5, p. 5
- (31) A-2, p. 4
- (32) A-5, p. 2
- (33) A-2, p. 8

As later confirmed, the enemy's strength was approximately 6,000. Of this number, half were disposed on the defense perimeter of "The Rock" awaiting an amphibious assault. The other half were located in and around the MALINTA HILL area. With this situation in mind, it could be correctly assumed that the enemy was adequately prepared for an amphibious assault, but, in all probability, would be caught flat-footed by an airborne assault. (34)

Another example as to what little our intelligence forces had, regarding the enemy on CORREGIDOR, was the close comparison of installations on the island in recent photos with photos of pre-war appearance -- clearly shows that little attempt had been made to fortify during the Japanese occupation. The Japanese were masters at camouflaging and this was another point in their favor relative to concealment, as they had been clever in concealing the development of their defensive organization. (35)

THE BATTALION PLAN OF ASSAULT

The line of departure would be from ELMORE and HILL airstrips at SAN JOSE, MINDORO, 0715 hours 16 February 1945. (See Map A)

The flight required about one hour and fifteen minutes for a distance of 140 miles from MINDORO to CORREGIDOR! 3d Battalion was to commence dropping on the target at Field A and Field B at 0830 hours, D plus 1. Both drop areas would be properly secured, in order to give protection to the 2d Battalion coming in at 1215. A perimeter was to be set up generally along the 500 foot contour line of "Topside". (See Map C) On D-Day, the 3d Battalion, 34th Infantry Regiment reinforced by 3d Platoon, AT Company and 3d

(34) A-5, p. 2

(35) A-6, App. A - Annex 1

Platoon, Cannon Company of the 34th Infantry Regiment would accompany 151st RCT when it entered the MARIVELES area; however, the 3d would remain aboard landing craft in the MARIVELES area and make the amphibious landing on CORREGIDOR, D plus 1, after the airborne assault had started. (36) A bomb and strafing line was established and not to be crossed before 1030 hours by 3d Battalion troops.

(See Map C) The 3d Battalion was to support by fire the amphibious landing of the 3d Battalion, 34th Infantry at 1030 hours and upon relief of the defensive perimeter by 2d Battalion, 503d RCT, to drive eastward toward MALINTA HILL to effect contact with amphibious troops. (37) Also, to advance and seize the high ground approximately 700 yards northeast of the old hospital site (See Map C); and the commanding ground about 1000 yards east of the hospital site. (See Map C) (38)

Battalion headquarters, Headquarters Company and H Company were to drop on Field A. Company G and Company I were to drop on Field B. (See Map C) As already stated, each field would be secured to protect parachutists coming in the second lift at 1215. The Battalion Command Post was to be the old lighthouse, which was situated east of the parade grounds. (See Map C) Immediately, upon landing and when the lighthouse was reached, battalion communication personnel would start stringing wire to the "Topside" barracks, north of Field A, where headquarters of the Rock Force was to be located. (See Map C) (39)

Each man dropping on the target was to carry one unit of ammunition on his person, according to the type weapon he was

- (36) A-1, p. 51
- (37) E-6; personal knowledge
- (38) A-6, p. 2
- (39) Personal knowledge

armed with, four "K" rations plus two canteens of water. Ammunition for the crew served weapons were to be dropped in bundles. Medical aid men were to drop with their platoons and the Battalion Aid Station was to be set up near the Battalion CP. A Portable Surgical Hospital Unit was to come in amphibiously, after "Topside" was secured. This unit to be under the supervision of regimental surgeon. (40)

Until the road from the SAN JOSE landing beach to "Topside" was opened, supply plans called for aerial drops. (See Map C) As mentioned in general situation, 12 C-47 planes were allotted for the supply missions.

MOVEMENT TO THE LINE OF DEPARTURE AND FINAL PREPARATIONS FOR THE ASSAULT

The battalion had reveille at 0500 16 February. A good hot breakfast was served by each of the companies kitchens. Last minute check-up of ammunition, and fitting of the parachute was done by every parachutist. Trucks pulled into the battalion area and moved out with loaded personnel for the airstrips, ELMORE and HILL, at 0630. Take off time was 0715 and the personnel loaded aboard the planes at 0700. Each plane's para-racks (equipment holders under the fuselage) were loaded with artillery containers or ammunition containers. The lead plane started down the runway at 0715 with the other planes following suit. They rendezvoused above MINDORO and then started northward following the coast line towards their objective. Approximately six miles out from the objective, the planes began to fall into their respective flight columns -- one for Field A and one for Field B. (See Map C) (41)

(40) Personal knowledge

(41) Personal knowledge

NARRATION

THE ASSAULT, FIRST DAY AND NIGHT

The two columns of planes were coming in on the objective from a southeasterly direction (See Map C) and were over their targets -- A and B fields -- when the parachutists began jumping at 0830 hours 16 February 1945. At 0829, the planes which were bombing and strafing the island had lifted their fire from the landing areas and began to bomb and strafe the MALINTA HILL area which was east of the established bomb line. (See Map C) (42)

On the initial drop, the regimental commander, in the control plane, noticed several parachutists drifting over the steep cliffs and some into the ocean. He immediately notified the planes flying in column, to lower the jump altitude to 500 feet above the drop zones and for the jumpmasters to count six -- instead of three -- after passing the "go-point". This was carried out and consequently, the personnel hit their landing zones. This is the first time our unit had ever used a control plane, as such, and it proved its value a number of times. (43)

As mentioned before, Battalion headquarters, Headquarters Company and H Company landed on Field A; G and I Companies landed on Field B. H Company secured Field A and I Company secured Field B. Battalion headquarters personnel moved quickly as possible to the lighthouse to set up the CP. G Company moved through the perimeter set up by I Company, eastward to take up positions on "Topside" to cover and support the 3d Battalion, 34th Infantry Regiment, who were making an amphibious landing at SAN JOSE beach at 1030 hours. The crew served weapons used to support this

(42) A-8, p. 60

(43) A-2, p. 6; personal knowledge

landing were .50 cal. machine guns from Battery D platoon and one 75 mm howitzer from Battery A, 462d Field Artillery Battalion. (44)

Taking in all considerations regarding casualties on a combat jump, it was estimated the jump casualties, on this particular mission, would run close to 20 per cent -- mainly because of the hazardous terrain; however, the actual figure was only 10.7 per cent for all personnel who jumped. Of this percentage figure -- the 3d Battalion had 75 per cent of the casualties. The fact that the control plane corrected the time when leaving the plane, and the wind had subsided to a lesser velocity, resulted in less jump injuries in the second lift. (45)

To effect proper naval and air support, after the assault had been committed, a detachment of JASCO (Joint Assault Signal Company) and SAP (Support Aircraft Party) had jumped with the 3d Battalion and set up communication immediately with the naval units lying off shore and the aircraft in the air and the rear base. (46)

Company H, after securing the field, proceeded to clear out the few enemy located in the enlisted men's barracks just north of the parade ground. (See Map D) In one of the rooms, one patrol discovered many cases of liquor and saki. A guard was immediately put upon this discovery! Up to this time, enemy opposition in all sectors of the line companies was slight. The air and naval bombardment had forced the Japanese to take cover and immediately, upon these fires being lifted, the parachutists landed -- effecting complete surprise.

(44) Personal knowledge

(45) A-7; personal knowledge

(46) A-8, p. 19; A-7; personal knowledge

Some of the men in I Company had drifted over the steep cliffs, southeast of Field B. (See Map D) They assembled and started to move along a trail, which led to "Topside", to join their unit quickly as possible. At a turn in the trail, west of Breakwater Point, these men encountered a small group of Japanese -- among them a Captain Ijn Itagaki, Naval Officer, who was commander of all Japanese forces upon the island. It was said that he left MALINTA TUNNEL, in order to view the incoming amphibious landing from Breakwater Point. (See Map D) The Japanese were quickly destroyed, with only a slight casualty among I Company personnel. (47)

At 1030, the amphibious forces landed on SAN JOSE BEACH. (See Map D) G and I Companies supported the landing with heavy machine guns assigned to them for this mission. (48) Enemy fire, from the caves in and around MALINTA HILL and BREAKWATER areas, was quite intensified at the initial landing. With Naval fire being directed at enemy positions, which were facing south and the 3d Battalion's parachutists firing towards western part of MALINTA HILL, the amphibious were able to make a successful landing. SAN JOSE BEACH had been mined with 130 mines which caused a few casualties and loss of some equipment. (49) Pushing forward, it was not long before their objective, MALINTA HILL, was taken. All entrances to MALINTA TUNNEL were covered with automatic fire.

The 2d Battalion began dropping at 1215, and by 1330 the drop was completed. As previously stated, the mission of the 2d Battalion was to relieve the 3d Battalion. To accomplish this with the most expeditious means -- the Battalion S-3 and executive

(47) A-5, p. 7; A-9, p. 178; personal knowledge

(48) A-5, p. 7; personal knowledge

(49) A-12

officers of each company in the 2d Battalion accompanied the 3d Battalion on their drop, thus being able to know the up to date situation and acquaint their commanders with such and, too, they could effect the relief of the 3d more quickly.

H Company, upon being relieved by 2d Battalion units, immediately gained access to the high ground northeast of the hospital site. (See Map D) They were met with little opposition and patrols were sent out to the west and east to maintain enemy contact. Slight skirmishes occurred throughout the afternoon, with the Company feeling out the enemy. H Company was withdrawn to the rear of regimental headquarters, and went into a perimeter for the night. It is well to note -- every night spent upon the island, the companies of 3d Battalion went into perimeter defense. (50)

G Company had supported the amphibious landings from positions west of the bomb line. At 1630 hours, G Company commander effected contact with 3d Battalion, 34th Infantry, and had his Company in the old gun positions between South Dock and North Dock and to the north. (See Map D) G Company commander did not wish to be caught in the gun positions at night; therefore, it was arranged for G Company to withdraw to the high ground, to rear of gun positions, (See Map D) and the area left vacant by this move would be covered by both G Company and 3d Battalion, 34th Infantry. (51)

I Company's machine guns helped support the amphibious landing from the 250 foot contour line. After being relieved by 2d Battalion units, I Company, less one platoon, took up positions northeast of Field B and generally along the 250 foot contour line.

(50) Personal knowledge

(51) Statement of Captain Jean P. Doerr

1st Platoon, Company I, was between F and D Companies, 2d Battalion with mission of covering enemy approaches leading into southwest portion of Field B. (See Map D) Towards dusk, I Company as a whole, was withdrawn to within the perimeter set up by 2d Battalion. This was done in order to give I Company a little rest, as the battalion commander had them scheduled for an early morning attack towards Breakwater Point.

The battalion commander called his company commanders to report to the CP at 1700 hours, in regards to orders and missions for the following day. G Company was to hold their ground, send out patrols and help support the landing of the 1st Battalion, 503d Parachute Infantry, which was making an amphibious landing at 1345 hours 18 February. The Rock Force Commander had requested XI Corps for permission to bring his 1st Battalion in amphibiously, as the 2d and 3d Battalions of the 503d and the 3d Battalion, 34th Infantry had the situation in hand, and it was no use incurring more jump injuries if it could be avoided. His request was sanctioned. (52) H Company was to have as its objective -- MORRISON HILL. (See Map E) In the attack, Company E, 2d Battalion would support by fire from their positions. I Company would attack towards BREAKWATER POINT area and clear out all enemy; also, to seal all caves with help from the demolition section from regiment. (See Map E) (53)

Harassing fire during the night was maintained by our artillery, in position on the parade ground (Field A, See Map D), on likely avenues of approaches leading into G and H positions.

(52) A-2, p. 7-8; personal knowledge
(53) Personal knowledge

The two navy destroyers, supporting the ground troops, illuminated the entire island on call, with illumination shells. (54) G Company occupying the high ground astride the road, killed six of the enemy who were trying to infiltrate their positions. (55) H Company also had enemy trying to infiltrate their positions and had undergone enemy mortar fire spasmodically during the night.

EVENTS DURING 17 FEBRUARY

H Company took off at dawn, 17 February, and launched a coordinated attack against the objective -- MORRISON HILL area. Company E supported H Company with machine gun fire, until the latter company reached the objective. This important terrain feature would well have aided the enemy defenses, but, it was only slightly defended and by 1000 hours H Company had secured the area. (56)

Due to the rugged terrain and the few trails available, I Company made their attack with combat patrols -- one patrol on the high ground running parallel with the trails, and another patrol following the trails. The trails led generally to the southeast and to the vicinity of Breakwater Point. All day long, skirmishes were held and even though the enemy's total casualties were much greater -- I Company had incurred a number of casualties in and around the entrances to the many caves they came upon. The troopers found, while they were covering entrances to caves, they would be fired upon from another direction. This meant, when attacking a number of caves, they must look around for other exits. Also, they found out that the caves in many instances were

(54) A-5, p. 8

(55) Statement of Captain Jean P. Doerr

(56) A-2, p. 10; personal knowledge

so located that one cave covered another. It became SOP to expect a cave or position of some type at every bend in a trail. Then again, it was found that the Japanese would sacrifice long fields of fire, in order to gain concealment. At 1630 hours, I Company took up position on the perimeter between E and D Companies, 2d Battalion.

At approximately 1345 hours, the 1st Battalion, 503d, which had flown over the island earlier in the day, dropping their supply bundles, continued on to airfields in the BATAAN area where transportation met the personnel and loaded them on Attack Personnel Destroyers. As the LCVF's approached San Jose Beach, they were fired upon by enemy automatic weapons facing seaward from the caves amongst the cliffs. The ships withdrew out in Caballo Bay, and the navy destroyers fired at these point targets and cleared the way for the battalion's landing. During the landing, G Company and the 3d Battalion, 34th Infantry supported the landing by firing at targets which presented themselves. The 1st Battalion moved into the general area where G Company was and G Company moved towards "Topside", to take over I Company's position where they went into a perimeter defense. H Company went into a perimeter defense in Morrison Hill area for the night. Outside of the usual infiltration tactics during the night, all was fairly normal. (57)

EVENTS DURING 18 FEBRUARY

On the morning of 18 February, the 1st Battalion, which had gone into a perimeter defense just north of San Jose Beach, started along the road leading to "Topside". Resistance was met and destroyed and by 1200 hours had reached "Topside". With the three

(57) A-1, p. 54; A-5, Overlay 9

battalions now on "Topside", Colonel George M. Jones, Rock Force Commander, divided areas of responsibility as follows: 1st Battalion was given the south and southwest; 2d Battalion given the area west and north; 3d Battalion given area northeast and southeast. (See Map E)

The first of numerous explosions, to be experienced on the island, happened at 0130 19 February, while I Company was in perimeter defense and the explosion went off while the Company was over an underground arsenal. Casualties were inflicted upon both sides. I Company had three killed and nine wounded; evidently all the Japanese, who were in the cave-like tunnel, were killed, as there was not any attack following the explosion. Later, I Company confirmed the fact that 23 Japanese had been killed.

EVENTS DURING 19 FEBRUARY

On 19 February, H Company was given the mission of knocking out a Japanese strong point, which was located in a deep ravine just south of North Dock. (See Map E) The Japanese had converted an old power and refrigerator plant into a formidable fortress. From this fortress, the enemy was able to command a view of the road leading from the beach to "Topside", deliver fire upon troops of 3d Battalion, 34th Infantry on top of MALINTA HILL and also deliver fire upon G Company troops. This point was reduced, by laying fire upon the gun ports, thus keeping the enemy occupied, while another force maneuvered around the flank and rear of the building. In this position, they managed to climb up on top of the objective and pour captured gasoline and oil down the ventilating shafts. With the destruction of this strong point, the road from the beach to "Topside" was now opened, which meant that

our dead and wounded could be evacuated by the navy; and water could be brought up to the troops. (58) With the capture of this point, 2d Platoon of H Company received fire from a large cave. In the process of forming a maneuver, to reduce this position, the Japanese knowing all was lost, set off a powder magazine which killed one officer and three men and wounded five others. The bodies of the four men killed were never found.

G Company still maintained contact with 3d Battalion, 34th Infantry by having one platoon straddling the boundary between the two units.

EVENTS DURING 20 FEBRUARY

3d Platoon, Company I, was given the mission, on 20 February, of cleaning up a hazardous sector below where the explosion had taken place in the company's area the previous morning. This sector had been under heavy destroyer fire, but still the Japanese were lined along the steep cliffs, bringing fire upon the platoon as it advanced. A section, from the demolition platoon at regiment, had accompanied the rifle platoon. Under cover of the automatic fire from the 3d Platoon, the demolition crew advanced upon the caves. In destroying these caves, the following method was used: Two or three WP's (white phosphorus grenades), a three second burst from the flame thrower and a twenty pound dynamite satchel put the finishing touches on each cave by closing the entrance. In two days, the demolition platoon working with I Company, sealed as many as 49 caves! (59)

It was at this time, that one of I Company's patrols discovered five large caves along the waters edge, southeast of South Dock.

(58) A-2, p. 10
(59) A-10, p. 14

Each cave possessed Japanese "Q" boats (suicide boats). There were a total of 19, and some of them were in excellent condition. (60) Within each cave were tracks, which when laid down to the water, would easily launch the boats. These boats were made of ply-wood and would have the space between the hull and the engine, rigged up for charges of dynamite. The object was to launch these boats from CORREGIDOR or surrounding shores, and have them ram into any naval ships which would present a point target. (61)

EVENTS DURING 21, 22, 23 FEBRUARY

The following three days were used by the battalion as a "mopping-up" phase. Patrols from all three line companies were working all day -- clearing out small pockets of enemy in the ever present caves.

The Rock Force Commander decided the resistance on the western end of the island had been sufficiently reduced, to permit the eastern portion of the island to be cleared of all enemy. The plan was to let the 2d Battalion remain on "Topside" and continue "mopping-up", and to have the 1st and 3d Battalions attack the eastern end of the island. Because of the narrowness of this portion of the island, it was decided to have the battalions attack in column.

EVENTS DURING 24 FEBRUARY

Early on the morning of 24th February, the two battalions, with the 1st leading, passed through the lines of 3d Battalion, 34th Infantry. Artillery began supporting the drive from their positions on the parade ground. If point targets presented themselves, in such a manner, that it was impossible for the artillery to fire upon -- the ever present navy, off shore 800 to 1000 yards, would support the ground attack.

(60) Personal knowledge

(61) Personal knowledge

By 1600 hours, 24 February, 1st Battalion had established their line, generally running from Infantry Point to Camp Point. The 3d Battalion, who had been "mopping-up" behind the 1st Battalion, was to their rear about 500 yards. H, I and G Companies were, in that order, across the western part of the "Tail" and all tying in, to form a perimeter defense for the night. During the day, numerous enemy were killed in their caves, which were on the waters edge, between Malinta Hill and Camp Point on the south side and between Malinta Hill and Infantry Point on the north side. (See Map F) Only enemy action in the 3d Battalion area were a few Japanese trying to infiltrate the perimeter; also, below the cliffs in the north sector, one could hear the enemy 'jabbering' away. They were endeavoring to build rafts, in order to escape from the island and over to Bataan; however, the navy were patrolling the waters and the following morning, the navy and the air corps killed many in the water who would not surrender. It is not known whether any enemy ever escaped the island. (62)

EVENTS DURING 25, 26, 27 FEBRUARY

By 25 February, 1st Battalion had advanced approximately 800 yards and established their line generally from Cavalry Point to Monkey Point. (See Map F) Just north of Monkey Point was an underground network of tunnels, and it was here that they had met strong resistance on 26 February -- mainly from automatic fire. 1st Battalion pushed forward and drove the enemy underground. Immediately, a perimeter was thrown around the entire Monkey Hill knoll -- covering all entrances. The Japanese, knowing they couldn't escape, set off an underground arsenal -- which was right under

(62) Personal knowledge

the entire 1st Battalion. In the explosion, 1st Battalion suffered 196 casualties -- of these 54 were killed. (63)

The 3d Battalion, which had been following closely the 1st, immediately, pushed through the 1st lines, and pressed the attack against the enemy in vicinity of KINDLEY airfield, which was cleared of mines before the day ended. On 27 February, G Company was given the mission of clearing the area north of the airfield, down to the waters edge and back towards Cavalry Point; H Company had the mission to clear area south of the airfield, down to the waters edge and back towards Monkey Point; I Company's mission was to continue east and clear the enemy from the "Tail" of the island. (See Map F) I Company followed the high ridge line, which ran the length of the "Tail". In doing this, they had to follow the only trail, consequently, a few casualties were received; however, driving the enemy from the high ground to their caves along the waters edge on both sides of the island! It was decided to split a platoon and send half down the south shore and half down the north shore. As the platoon proceeded east, Japanese soldiers were killed in caves, which bordered the waters edge. Out from East Point is a little island known as Hooker Point. A group of the enemy had gone over to this island at low tide. (See Map F) The 1st Platoon, upon reaching the tip of the island, awaited for low tide, crossed to Hooker Point and destroyed the last of the enemy resistance on east part of CORREGIDOR!

EVENTS DURING 28 FEBRUARY - 2 MARCH

During the period 28 February to 2 March -- "mopping-up" operations continued over the entire island. 2 March, Colonel

(63) A-7, p. 3; personal knowledge

George M. Jones met General MacArthur and party, at South Dock, and escorted them to "Topside". Outside of the necessary precautions being taken for security, majority of the troopers were present in formation when the General ordered the flag to be raised. This was a fitting climax, to a well coordinated assault by all arms, which began 16 February and ended 8 March.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

1. ORIENTATION

The fact that each and every man in the Battalion had been well oriented in the operation, helped greatly for the initial phase to be successfully completed. Assembly points were gone over and over again, until there wasn't any doubt in any person's mind. Troops after landing, quickly went to designated points and commenced their part of the show.

2. USE OF SMALL UNITS

The decision to drop 8 men at a time on Fields A and B was made -- even though these landing zones were anything but suitable, as they were littered with rubble, tree stumps and bomb-craters. When parachuting first came into vogue, as a means of combat, the main idea or mission was to land small units in enemy held territory -- destroy the enemy, installations and then await for reinforcements. However, during World War II, airborne troops were committed on large scales, with very few being committed on a Battalion level. It is in my opinion, that small unit operations will be used to a greater degree in any future wars.

3. COORDINATION

The close coordination between the navy, airforce and our ground forces, in a small operation such as this, is without

parallel. Coordination from the time operation was planned, to the time it was completed, is an excellent example how our armed forces can cooperate to the advantage of all concerned. The presence of JASCO personnel on the island went a long way in establishing this well coordination operation. The fact that this was JASCO personnel first jump from a plane is well in their favor.

4. ENEMY INFORMATION

Intelligence had information of enemy strength to be approximately 850! When operation was completed, at least 6000 enemy were destroyed! Aerial photographs, taken prior to the assault and after comparison with pre-war photos, clearly showed no changes taking place, and it wasn't until the troops had landed that the presence of a large force of enemy was discovered. With very little information available relative to the enemy -- the assault plan for the 3d Battalion was clear and concise. After landing and exploiting to north and northeast, a more complete plan was put into effect, as contact with the enemy was maintained.

5. SURPRISE

The element of surprise, which is the parachutists main advantage, worked to perfection in the 3d Battalion assault. The heavy bombing, which had preceded the assault, had driven the enemy into their caves, thereby, causing the airborne attack to be that more successful. It was at least an hour before any form of organized resistance was contacted by our units.

6. ENEMY ANTICIPATION

The enemy had adequately prepared for an amphibious landing and even though warned, had not anticipated an airborne landing on the island. The Japanese Commander, in making an estimate of

the situation, regarding the possibility of an airborne attack, made the inexcusable error by ignoring this possibility. If he had prepared defenses for an airborne landing -- the mission of capturing Corregidor might have taken a little longer.

7. SUPPORT FIRE

The enemy entrenched in their caves, awaiting the landing of amphibious troops, were not anticipating fire from "Topside", therefore, with the 3d Battalion, 503d supporting the 3d Battalion, 34th Infantry by fire from "Topside", the landing was successful.

8. USE OF CONTROL SHIP

It was estimated, in the pre-planning phase, that 20 per cent casualties would be experienced by the RCT; however, in the actual jump, this percentage figure was lowered to 10.7 per cent. The use of the control ship proved its usefulness, and was the main factor in lowering the casualties of the 3d and 2d Battalions.

9. LOSS OF ENEMY COMMANDER

The Japanese Commander, leaving his command post in Malinta Tunnel, in order to view the amphibious assault and soon afterwards being killed by our men -- greatly enhanced our success, as it took the enemy a long time afterward to become again organized.

10. RECONNAISSANCE FLIGHTS

The morale factor was greatly advanced among the troops, when every jumpmaster was given the opportunity to fly over the target area on a reconnaissance mission, on regular bomb runs, to view the terrain and his established "go-point".

11. EXPLOSIONS

At various times during the process of the attack, or when in a perimeter defense -- the enemy, being fanatical, would set

off underground arsenals situated under our troops. These violent explosions would cause many casualties among our troops, causing the attack to be slowed down to some degree.

12. ENEMY FIELDS OF FIRE

It was found, that the Japanese would invariably sacrifice fields of fire in order to obtain concealment. In doing this, he would let our troops advance up to his position, and then set off an explosive charge causing many casualties among our troops. When attacking these caves, the troopers constantly had to look for other exits and cover them, while the demolition crew worked on the main entrance.

13. EVACUATION

In the early stages of the operation, injured and wounded personnel at Battalion and Regimental Aid Stations could not be evacuated, until the road leading from the beach to "Topside" was opened. With such a small area, containing both our troops and the enemy, it is quite conceivable to understand that our wounded, injured and medical personnel were under fire a good deal of the time. Upon opening of the road, water could now be taken up to the troops.

14. PERIMETER DEFENSE

Some persons, undoubtedly, would question the withdrawing at times of our forces into a perimeter for the night -- and the following day push forward and retake the ground taken the previous day. Reason for this motive was, whoever had control of "Topside" -- more or less, controlled the situation.

15. WP GRENADES

WP grenades were carried by all personnel who were on combat patrols. These were favored over the hand grenades and were used individually, or in conjunction with flamethrowers and automatic weapons.

16. CRITICAL TERRAIN

The enemy failed, in many cases, to occupy, organize and defend a critical terrain feature. This was exemplified in the early stages of the operation -- especially, in the north sector of H Company.

17. AGGRESSIVENESS

The aggressiveness of patrols, by always advancing and pushing forward, carrying the fight to the enemy, clearly showed the character of the American soldier who possessed the drive, determination and skill of men who were doing the actual fighting.

LESSONS

✓ 1. Supervision is definitely reduced, as a problem, to an easy task -- provided every man in the organization is well acquainted with the complete situation.

2. Landing drop zones, no matter how small or how rugged, can be used successfully by airborne troops.

✓ 3. It is recommended, that special units, such as JASCO, be trained as airborne personnel, in order for them to accompany air assault units upon operations like Corregidor. Close liaison is necessary, between ground personnel and supporting arms (navy and airforce) if coordination is to be successful.

4. Do not be optimistic, when information regarding the enemy strength is a diminutive figure and with photos not showing any

noticeable change in terrain features -- for the enemy had utilized his camouflage training to perfection.

5. Airborne troops can be successfully used upon small drop areas and effect complete surprise, if air superiority is gained and the drop is adequately controlled. However, upon landing, they must expect enemy contact, for even though the target area had undergone a terrific bombing -- the Japanese just holed up in their caves and were unharmed.

6. Commanders, enemy or U.S., should never make the error in ignoring the possibility of any method of attack -- be it land, sea or air.

7. In an airborne operation of this type, it is advisable to employ airborne troops to support amphibious troops in the latter's initial landing phase.

8. Whenever possible, it is recommended a control ship be utilized -- especially, if drop area is small and prevailing winds are present. Recommend carrying 10 per cent overstrength on an operation such as Corregidor.

9. A commander, in a defense situation, should be in immediate vicinity of his CP, where he can control all troops under his command. He can estimate the situation and formulate his plan at the CP, by having information coming into him.

10. It is recommended, whenever situation presents itself and you have air superiority, to have jumpmasters fly over and view the targets.

11. It is recommended, if our troops are up against a fanatical enemy like the Japanese, that they cover enemy caves and positions from a distance rather than closing in close and sitting on top of a possible arsenal.

12. Our combat patrols, when coming upon trails or caves, should be aware, when not receiving enemy fire, of a possible concealed ambush, or explosives being set off.

13. In order to evacuate the casualties, it is advisable to make a priority on a certain route to be cleared, of enemy, as soon as possible.

14. In terrain, such as Corregidor, it is advisable to withdraw at night and go into a perimeter defense, to insure possession of the main terrain feature, from which to operate.

15. It was found out that WP grenades were much better to use, than ordinary hand grenades, when throwing into shallow caves -- thus driving the enemy out and to destruction.

16. A force which does not take advantage of a critical terrain feature, only hastens its defeat.

17. Aggressiveness should be stressed in all phases of training, and by commanders to their combat units.